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SECURITY INFORMATION

COUNTRY China (Sinkiang)

REPORT

SUBJECT Data on Sinkiang Roads/Travel Time/Road Markers/
 Use of Roads

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REPORT**

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

1. After Governor Sheng Shih-tsai became Governor of Sinkiang [redacted] the Soviets aided him in embarking on an extensive road building program, to facilitate their exploitation of this mineral-rich area. This road building program continued after the Soviets and Governor Sheng were ousted from Sinkiang [redacted]

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2.

- a. Although the road between Chuguchak (Tahoheng) and Wusu is a main artery between these two points, it is not a shoosse (graded and macadamized highway).
 - b. The cart road between Chuguchak, Eilun Tokhoi (Fuluntongai) and Sharasume (Chenghwa) was being improved to enable trucks to traverse it.
 - c. The cart roads between Heishanto and Manass (Suilai) and Eilun Tokhoi and Kuchengtze (Kitai) were abandoned and only used by an occasional nomadic herdsman in moving his cattle to and from winter pastures in the south.
 - d. The main northern east-west shoosse in Sinkiang starts at Khorgos in the USSR and passes through the following towns: Suiting, Santai, Tsingho, Wusu, Urumchi (Tihwa), Turi'an, Chikurting (Tsikiotsing), Harai (Qomul) and Singingsia. This shoosse is about eight meters wide all the way from Suiting to Singingsia.
- (1) The section between Kuldja (Ining) and Khorgos in the USSR, which passes through Suiting, is approximately two meters wider than the rest of the shoosse. This section of the shoosse is about 10 meters in width.

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- (2) The "secondary road" between Kuldja and Tsingho [redacted] is actually a winding mountain trail that can only be travelled on horseback.
- (3) The northern alternate route between Urumchi and Hami, which passes through Kuchengtze (Kitai), is not widely used because of the terrain and colder climate.
- (4) The section between Turfan and Hami is a natural shosse. A shosse did not have to be constructed between these two points because the surface of this entire area is covered by a hard crust of dirt and pebbles. Since there is never any rain in this area the only thing that had to be done was to remove the few large rocks along this natural roadway. When travelling along this section of the shosse, the big problem was to keep from straying off of the roadway. Along most of this section, the shosse follows telegraph posts. In sections where it doesn't, the driver must be constantly alert in watching for and following the tracks of other vehicles.
- (5) A 50 kilometer section of this shosse, between Hami and Singingia, passes through a series of sand dunes. When high winds arise, and they quite frequently do in this area, sand completely covers portions of this section of the shosse and halts all traffic. Special crews are maintained in Hami for clearing off the shosse when this does occur.

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- u. The "secondary road" leading in a southerly direction from Kuldja to Misart and then westward to the town of Prshevalsk in the USSR was improved [redacted]. The "secondary road" from Misart, through Misart Pass, south to Aqsu (Akosu) in reality is not a road but a treacherous horse trail. It crosses many vast and steep glacial fields where steps, or levels, have been cut out of the ice by centuries of travellers. Here, the rider has to even dismount and aid his steed in traversing these ice fields.
- f. Again, a small mountain cattle trail from Kara Shahr (Yenki) leading right through the Tien Shan Range in a westerly direction to Misart and into the USSR is indicated as a "secondary road" [redacted]. No vehicle can possibly follow this trail.
- g. [redacted] the Soviets improved the road starting at Irkeshtan, USSR, and passing through Kashgar (Shufu), Yangi Shahr (Shuleh), Yarkand (Soche), Qarghaliq (Yehcheng) and south to the Kashmir border. The Soviet engineers attached to the Dorstroy (Sinking Main Road Building Agency) headquarters in Urumchi used to brag that they did an extra good job on this shosse and that it is superior to all others in Sinkiang. They claimed to have shortened the route and built it to handle vehicles of any weight. They invariably referred to it as a strategic road which might some day prove useful to the USSR if a quick military thrust into India becomes necessary.
3. The major highway routes used by motor transport in Sinkiang [redacted] are the following:
- Zimnai, USSR, to Sharakune, via Burchan (Pierhtain)
 - Sharakune to Chagachak, via Balan Toknoi
 - Sakhty, USSR, to Jushi, via Chagachak
 - Garynkol, USSR, to Kuldja, via Misart
 - Khorgos, USSR, to Kuldja, via Tsingho
 - Suiting to Urumchi, via Sankai and Jushi
 - Urumchi to Chikurtin, via Kuchengtze
 - Urumchi to Chikurtin, via Turfan
 - Chikurtin, to Singingia, via Hami
 - Urumchi to Aqsu, via Turfan
 - Aqsu to Irkeshtan, USSR, via Yarlbasli (Pachu) and Kashgar
 - Kashgar to Qarghaliq, via Yarkand
 - Qarghaliq to the Kashmir border
 - Qarghaliq to Khotan (Hotien)
 - Khotan to Kurla (Kuerhlei), via Cherchen (Chien-to)
- a., b., c. and d. are the only motor routes that are not shosses.

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4. [redacted] the average time that it takes to travel, by truck, between the major towns of Sinkiang?

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Khorgos, USSR to Kuldja	3 hours
Kuldja to Wusu	2½ days
Wusu to Chuguchak	3 days
Wusu to Urumchi	1½ days
Urumchi to Turfan	1 day
Turfan to Hami	5 days
Hami to Singingai	1½ days

5. The volume of traffic on all the main trade routes and shosses in Sinkiang remains about the same throughout the year. Most of Sinkiang has an extremely dry climate and is therefore not affected by the seasons. Heavy snow or rain in the northern sections of Sinkiang is considered only a temporary nuisance which was taken into account when the routes were chosen and the shosses constructed. Thus, snow or rain may slow down traffic, or even temporarily halt it, but is never a serious problem.
6. All major roads and shosse highways in Sinkiang were marked with either short wooden posts or large rocks. These road markers, when within approximately two kilometers of a town, were about 10 to 15 yards apart. Whereas, after that they were spaced about one kilometer apart. In places where telegraph posts ran along side of the roadway, they were used as markers. The distance to the next town, or village, was painted onto these road markers in arabic script. The paint used was either red or black, depending on which color would show up best on each individual marker.
7. The only Sinkiang restriction as to the use of roads by different types of vehicles and animals applied to the shosses, the macadamized highways. These were for use by motor vehicles only. All other roads in Sinkiang are either cart roads to begin with, or cattle trails. The shosses had a narrow dirt road running along side, which was for use by arbas (native carts), camels, mules, iahik (donkeys), horses, cattle and man. However, since there were no patrols to enforce this government regulation and traffic on these highways is comparatively light and sporadic (there being no regular scheduled bus or truck traffic and trucks never dared to go on the open road alone, but travelled in convoys for fear of being ambushed and slaughtered by bandits), carts also used the shosses. They found the rolled macadamized surface of the shosses much more satisfactory than the rutted dirt roads that were provided for their use. Since all motor vehicles were government owned, their drivers were required to enforce this regulation. Therefore, the cart drivers would use the shosse until they heard or saw motor vehicles approaching; they would then quickly swerve off of the shosse onto their road and get back on after the motor vehicles passed out of sight and hearing. If a cart was caught on the shosse, its driver was punished by a severe beating.
8. Cattle herds were never moved along shosses, or cart trails, because the animals required soft ground and pastures to survive long treks. It will be a long time before animal transport in Sinkiang is replaced by motor transport. The major reasons being the lack of adequate roads because of the rugged terrain, the lack of motor vehicles and industrial development, the economic and cultural backwardness of the people who are still basically nomadic, pastoral tribesmen that are completely happy with their primitive ways.
9. In Sinkiang, when a road crosses a deep stream, a very simple and primitive bridge is constructed. First, the banks of the stream are dug away and a log placed on either side of the stream. Then thick wooden logs are placed, side by side, across the stream, resting on the logs that were placed on both banks. It is calculated so that the top of this wooden bridge is about four to six inches below the level of the road. The logs are then covered over with a mixture of mud and gravel and straw. If the span is too great for the size of the logs, then logs are placed

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under the bridge for additional support. Because the climate in most parts of Sinkiang is very dry, these bridges never seem to rot out. As almost all stream and river beds in Sinkiang are flat, firm and completely covered with pebbles, many of them are crossed without the use of bridges. The average mountain stream in Sinkiang is fast and the depth of the water is about two meters. Their banks are steep and five to six meters high. The two largest rivers in northern Sinkiang, the Ili and Khara Irtysh Rivers, are also extremely fast, their beds are flat and covered with pebbles and their banks are from one to ten meters high.

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